

HORBLE SANK AT THE FIRST SHOT.

The Captain of the Northern Light

By LLOYD OSBOURNE

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saing wind sang in the risking of the The weather horizon, dark and tain. brilliant, in ominous alternations showed a sky of piled-up cloud interspersed with inky patches where equalls were bursting. To leaward the broad lagoon, stretching for a dozen mires to the tree-topped rim of reef, smoked with the haze of an impending gale. Ashore, the palms bent like grass in the succeeding guets, and the ocean beaches reverberated with a furious surf. The great stell of Makin, no higher than a man, no wider than a couple of furlamps, but in circumference a sinuous giant of 30 milles or more, by like a make on the bolsterous waters of the equator and

Within the lagoon, and not far off the settlement, two ships racked at One, the Northern Light. was a powerful topsuit schooner of a Sundred tens; straight bowed, low in the water, built on fine lines and yet sparred for safety, the nort of vessel that does well under plain sall, and when pressed can fly. The other, the Edelweiss, was a miniature fore and after of about 20 tons, a toy of delicacy and grace, betraying at a glance that she had been designed a yacht, and in spits of fallen fortunes, still sailed as one. The man that laid her lee rall under would get danger as well as speed for his pains, and in time would be likely to satisfy a taste for both by making a swift trip to the bottom.

The deck of the Northern Light was empty save for the single tall figure of Gregory Cole, captain owner, who was leaning over the rail gazing at the Edelweiss. He was a man of about 30, his tanned, handsome face overcast and somber, his eyes, with their characteristic hunted Amailer neighbor.

He had never known how passion ately he had loved Madge Blanchard until he had lost her, until after that wild quarrel on Nonootch, when her father had called him a slaver to his face, and they had parted on either aide in anger; until he had beaten up from westward to find her the month ald wife of Joe Harble. Somehow in the course of those long, miserable months he had never thought of her marrying; he felt so confident of that fierce love she had so often consteamed for him; he had come back repentant, ashamed of the burning of-Mense he had then taken, determined to let bygones be bygones, and to be gin, if need be, a new and a more blameless way of life.

He had to see her. He was mad to wee her. The thought of her tortured and tempted him without end. pose she, too, had learned that love is stronger than oneself: that the mouth can say Yes when the heart self, had found the time to repent her Was he the man to leave her thus; to acquiesce tamely in a decision that was doubtless aiready abhorrent to her; to remain with unlifted hands when she might be on are for the sign to come to him? No, never! he'd beg her forgiveness and offer her the choice. Yes or no! It was for her to choose.

He jumped into the dinghy and pulled over to the schooner. at a distance, she seemed to shrink as he drew near ber, so that when he stood up he was surprised to find his Horble, this coarse, red-faced trader, with the pug nose, the fat hands, the faded blue eyes that met his own so

"Capt, Horble?" said Gregory Cole. "Glad to see you aboard," said

They shook hands and sat side by side on the rail.

It was a wild March day, and the ! "Where's Madge?" said Gregory. "Mrs. Horbie's ashore," said the cap

> "I'm afraid I can never call her any thing but Madge," said Gregory, detecting the covert reproach in the other's voice.

Horble was plainly fil at case. His face turned a deeper red. He was on the edge of blurting out a disagreeable remark, and then healtated. making an inarticulate sound in his throat. Like everybody else, he was afraid of the labor captain.

"Crow's ashore, too," said Gregory, glancing about the empty deck There ain't no crow," muttered

"Thunder" cried Gregory "De you do it with electricity, or what?"

"Me and Madge runs her," returned Horbie. "Do you mean to say she pully-

haula your damn ropes?" exclaimed Gregory. "Yes," said Horbic, "What's 20

tons botween the two of us?"
"And cooks?" said Gregory.
"And cooks," said Horble.

"I know she can sail a boat against

anybody," said Gregory, wincing at

Horble spat in the water and said His fat, broad back said nothing plainer than words: "You're an intruder! Get out!"

"I believe she's aboard this very minute," said Gregory, with a strange smile

She's ashore, I tell you," said Hor-

"I'll just run below and make sure," said Gregory.

He slipped down the little companion way, looked about the empty cabin and peered into the semi-darkness of the only stateroom.

"Madge!" he cried, "Madge!"

Horble had not fled to him There was not a soul b-low. cabin table he saw Madge's sewing machine and a half-made dress of cotton print. She had always been fond of books, and there, in the corner, was her little bookease, taken bodily from her old home in Nonootch. Scattered about here and there were other things that brought her memory painfully back to him; that hurt him with their familiarity, that caused him to lift them up and hold them with a sort of despairing wonder; her guitar, her worn, lock fast desk, the old gilt photograph album he remembered He sat down at the table and buried his face in his hands. What a fool he had been! What a fool he had been!

He was roused by the sound of Horble's footsteps down the ladder. With his head leaning on his hand, he looked at the big naked feet feeling for the steps, then at the uncouth clothes as they gradually appeared, then at the fat, weak, frightened face of the man himself. He grew sick at the sight of him. Would Horble strike him? Would Horble have the grit to order him off the ship? No the infernal coward was getting out the gin-a bottle of square-face and two glasses.

"Say when," said Horble, "When," said Gregory.

Horble tipped the bottle into his own glass. A second mate's grog One could see what the fellow drank

"Here's luck," said Gregory.
"Drink hearty," said Horbie.
"Joe Horbie," said Gregory, leaning both elbows on the table, "there's something you ought to know; I love Madge, and Madge loves me!"

Horble gasped.
"She's mine!" said Gregory.

Horble helped himself to more gin, and then slowly wiped his mouth with the back of his band. You're forgetting she's my wife,"

he said. "I'll give you a thousand pounds

You can't sell white women," said "She ain't labor." "A thousand pounds!" repeated

I won't sell my wife to no man," said Horble.

The pair looked at each other. Horen hand felt for the gin again. His speech had grown a little thick. He was angry and flustered, and a dull resentment was mantling his heavy

"I'll go the schooner," cried Greg-"The Northern Light, as she lies there this minute, not a dollar owing on her bettom, with £250 of specie in her safe. Lock, stock and larred, she's yours?" Horble shook his head.

Madge ain't for sale," he said. Thease yourself, said Gregory You'll end by losing her for noth-

Cart. Coin." said Horble, "Madge has fold me how near it was a go between you and her, and how, if you sain't cleared out so suiden the way on did she would have married you in spite of oil Handard. But when field often and you musta't bear me no malice for having stepped in and taken your leavings. What's done's done, and it's a sorry game to come back too late and found a man who never did you no harm" Oh!" said Gregory

"If you cheese," continued Herble in his tone of wounded reasonablees, "you can make a power of misof between me and Madge. I don't ink it comes very well from you to out, I don't think anything that alls himself a man would do it; least of all a genelman like yourself, whom we all respect and look up to, Capt. Cole. if you've lest Madge, you know you can only blame yourself." I don't call her best, said Gregory.

"Capt. Cole," said Hortle, calmiy, but with a quiver of his lip, "we'll take another drink, and then we'll

I'm not going till I see Madge," said Gregory

Hornle began to tremble.

"It's for Madge to decide," added Decide what?" demanded Horble

in a husky stutter. Between you and me, old fellow,

"And you've the gall to say that on my ship, at my table, about my wife!

exclaimed Horble, ponetuating the sentence with the possessive. Yes," said Gregory. Horble sat awhile allent. He was obviously turning the matter over in

his head. He said at last he would so on deck and take another look to windward. There's a power of dirt to wind

ward!" he said.

Gregory was conscious of a belaying pin being whipped out of sight, and in an instant he was roused and tense, his nostrils vibrat ing with a sense of danger. two men stared at each other, and

then liorble backed into the state room, remarking with furtive insincer There's a power of dirt to windward!" This said, the door went shut behind him. Gregory sprang to



Where's Madge.

his feet and burst it open with his powerful shoulders, crushing Horble against the bunk, who, pistol in hand, fired at him point blank. The bullet went wide, and there was a sound of shattering glass. Gregory's hands cienched themselves on Horble's, and the revolver twisted this way and that under the double grasp. Horbic was panting like a steam engine; his lower jaw hung open, and he cried as he fought, the tears streaking his red face; there was an agonized light in his eyes, for his forefinger was break ing in the trigger guard. A hair's breadth more and he could have driven a bullet through his oppo nent's body; a twist the other wayand he mouned and ground his teeth and frenziedly strove to regain what he had lost. Suddenly he let go, snatched his left hand clear, and throttled Gregory against the wall Gregory, suffocating, his eyes staring from their sockets, his mouth dribbling blood and froth, struggled with supreme desperation for the pistol Getting it in the very nick of time, and eluding Horble's right hand, he fired twice through the armpit down.

Horble sank at the first shot, and received the second kneeling. Then he toppled backward, and lay in a twitching heap against the drawers below the bunk, groaning and coughing. Gregory, with averted face, gave him another shot behind the ear, and another through the mouth, and then went out, sick and faint, shutting the stateroom door behind him. He sat for a long time beside the

for her, cash and bills," said Greg- table, absolutely spent, and still holding the revolver in his hand. He was shaking in a chill, though the temperature was over 80, and the cabin when he had first entered it, had seemed to him overpoweringly hot and stiffing. He warmed himself with a nip of gin. He looked over his clothes for a trace of blood, and as thankful to find none. He took off his cost; he examined the soles of his shoes. No blood! Thank God, no

He went on deck and cast the recolver everboard, standing at the taff all and watching it sink. the time he had been below the wind had risen; it was blowing great guns to seaward, the Insoon itself white and broken as far as the evecould reach. Aboard his own schoonir they were busy housing the top masts and the yeo-heave-yeo of straining voices warned him that meroft was hoisting in the boats and making everything anug-Gregory leaned against the wheel

and tried to think. To threw Horhie's body overhoard would be to ac complish nothing. The blood, the shot holes, the disordered cabin, would all betray him. To scuttle the a better plan, but that involved re-turning to the Northern Light, with the possibility of Madge coming off in the interval and discovering the anoter for herself. No, the risk of hat appalled him. Besides; what over happened, he had another reason for keeping the truth from Madge the fact of Horbie's death, even it the thought it accidental, would renegrable that she would feel any but horrer stricken, whether she ladged her former lover innocent er not. She might even undergo a terrible remerse. At such a moment how little likely she would be to give way to him! Of course she would re Any woman would refuse Every restraining influence would be massed against him. No, his only lay in getting her aboard his schooner and out of the largon before the least suspicion could dawn upon her. Once away, and it might be two years before she might even hear of Horbie's death. Once away, and the empty seas would keep his secret. Once away-

He studied the weather with a new and consuming anxiety. How could be manage to get out at all, or pick a coorse through the middle channel It was thick with coral rocks, and in a day so overcast the keenest eye aloft would be at fault. And outside, what then? Already it was working up a hurricane. To run be fore it would be courting death.

But to stake Madge's life! Madge whom he loved so dearly! Madke, or whom he would have died! And yet there was something sub lime in the thought of taking her in his arms and driving before the gale the storm sails treble reefed on bending yards, the decks awash from end to end. Madge beside him, the pitchy night in front, the engulfing seas behind; to swim or sink, to ride or smother, accepting their fate together, and, if need be, drowning at the last in each other's arms.

He looked toward the settlement and saw a crowd of natives pushing a whaleboat into the water; looked again, and saw old Maka taking his place in the stern sheets and assist ing a woman in beside him. The woman! It needed no second glance to tell him it was Madge. He had never counted on her coming off in company. Fool that he was, he had taken it for granted that she would be alone. Everything, in fact, turned on her being alone. Then, with a start, he remembered his own dinghy and how it would betray him. He had made it fast on the schooner's star quarter, near the little commodation ladder. Going on his hands and knees, lest his head should be seen above the shallow rail, he up loosed the painter, worked the boat astern, and drew it again to port. Then he crouched down in the alley way and waited.

A few minutes later and the whaler was bumping against the schooner's It might have been bumping against Gregory's heart, so agonizing was the suspense as he lay breathless and cramped between the coffinitke width of the house and rail.

"It was kind of you to bring me off Maka," said Madge.

The old Hawaiian laughed mu sically in denial. "No, no!" he cried. "You must come below and see the

cantain," said Madge Gregory was in a cold sweat of as

"Too much storm," said Maka

doubtfully. "I go home now, and put rocks on the church roof." "Five minutes won't matter," said Madge.

Again Gregory trembled. "More better I go home quick.

said Maka. "No rocks, no roof! The boat shoved off, the crew strik ing up a song. Madge seemed to remain standing at the gangway where they had left her. Gregory felt by instinct that she was gazing at the

she sighed; that she was lost in rev erie and was loath to go below. He rose stiffly from Even as he did so it came over him that he was extraordinarily tired-so tired that he swayed as he

stood and looked at her. "Madge:" he said in almost a whisper. "Madge!"

She turned instantly, paling as she saw who confronted her. "Greg!" she cried.

For a moment they stared at each other speechless. Then he leaped on the house and ran to her, she shrinking back from him as he tried to take her hands.

"You must not!" she cried, as he

must not! I'm married. It's all different now.

He tried to put his arms around her, but she pushed him fiercely back. Her eyes were flashing and her bosom rose and fell.

"I'm Joe's wife," she said. Then, from his face, she seemed to

divine something.

"What have you done to Joe?" she cried. She would have passed him, but he stopped her.

"No, no!" he protested. "Let me go, or I shall call him," she oke out. "You shan't insult me! broke out. "You s You shan't kiss me!

He was kiesing her even as he held her back, even as she fought and struggled with him-on the lips, the neck, on her black, loosened hair, now tangling and flying in the wind.



"Get Into Your Boat."

He was so weak that she soon got the etter of him-so weak and dizzy that he did not guard himself as she struck him on the mouth with her little doubled-up fist.

He put his hand to his lip and found it bleeding. He showed her what she had done. She drew back, and regarded him with mingled pity and exultation.

"Now will you let me go?" she cried. "Madge," he returned, "Joe's drunk

in his berth. I made him drunk, Madge I had to talk to you, alone, and there was no other way.

She was stung to the quick. Her husband's shame was bers, and it was somehow plain that Horble had been at fault before. She never thought to doubt Greg's word, though his callousness revolted her. "What is it you want to say?" she

said at last in an altered voice.

"To ask you to forgive me." "For what? for taking advantage of Joe's one failing?" "No; for leaving you the way I

"I'll never do that, Greg-never,

never, never! "Your father-"

"Don't try to blame my father, "I blame only myself,"

Why have you come back to torture me?" she exclaimed. "You said it was forever. You cast me off, when I cried and tried to keep you. You said I'd never see you again."

"I was a fool, Madge," "Then accept the consequences, and

leave me alone." "And if I can't--"

She looked him squarely in the "I am Joe's wife," she said.

"Madge," he said, "I am not try-ing to defend myself. I'm throwing myself on your mercy. I'm begging you, on my knees, for what I threw away. I-

"You've broken my heart," she "why should I mind if you break yours?"

"Madge," he cried, "In ten minutes we can be aboard the Northern Light and under weigh; in an hour we can be outside the reef; in two and this cursed island will sink for ever behind us, and no one here will ever see us again or know whither we have gone. Let us follow the gale, and push into new seas, among new people-Tahiti, Marquesas, the Pearl islands-where we shall win back our lost happiness, and find our love only the stronger for what we've suffered."

She pointed to the windward sky I think I know the port we'd make." "Then make it," he cried, "and go

down to it in each other's arms." For a moment she looked at him in a sort of exaltation. She seemed to hesitate no longer. Her hot hands reached for his, and he felt in her quick and tumultuous breath the first token of her surrender. Herself a child of the sea, brought up from infancy among boats and ships, her hand as true on the tiller, her spark ling eyes as keen to watch the luft of a sall as any man's, she knew as well as Gregory the hell that await ed them outside. To accept so terrible an ordeal seemed like a purification of her dishonor. If she died, she would die unstained; if she lived, it would be after such a bridal that would obliterate her tie to the sot Then, on the eve of her giv ing way, as every line in her body showed her longing, as her head drooped as though to find a resting place on the breast of the man she loved, she suddenly called up all her

"I'm Joe's wife!" she said. Gregory faltered as he tried again to plead with her; but in his mind's eye he saw that stiffening corpse below, lying stark and cold on the cabin

resolution and tore herself free.

"You gave me to him," she burst "I'm his, Greg. I will not betray my husband for any man." Again he besought her to go with

would have kissed her. "Greg, you him. But the moment of her made ness had passed.

He sat down on the rail instead, his eyes defying hers.

She stepped aft, and his heart stood still as she seemed on the point of descending the companion. But she had another purpose to mind. Throwing saide the gaskets, she stripped the sail covers off the mainmast and began with practiced hands to rent down to the third reef. Then she went forward and did the same to the forestnysail. A minute later, hardly knowing why or how, except that he was helping Madge, Gregory, like a man in a dream, was pulling with her on the halyards of both sails. wind thundered in them as they rose; the main boom jerked violently at the sheet and hashed to and fro the width of the deck; the anchor chain fretted and gawed in the hawae hole the whole schooner strained and creaked and shook to the keelson.

what she was doing.
"Geomy to sea, Greg," she said. he cried

Gregory, in amazement, asked Madge

"Jon and L" she said.

It was on his tennue to tell her Joe was dead; but though he tried, he could not do so. It wasn't in flesh and blood to tell her he had killed her husband. He could only look at her helplessly, and say over

and over again: "To sea!"
"Greg," she said, "I mean to leave you while I am brave-while I am yet able to resist-while I can still re-member I am Joe's wife!"

"And drown," he said "What do I care if I do?" she re-"What do I care for any-

"If it's to be one or the other," he said, "I'll go myself. With my big schooner I'd have twice the chance

you'd have." She put her arms round his neck and kissed him

"You sweet traitor," she said, "you'd play me false! He protested vehemently that he

would not deceive her.
"Besides," she said, "I could risk myself, but I couldn't hear to risk you. Greg."

He tried a last shot. The words almost strangled in his throat.
"And Joe?" he said. "Have you no

thought of Joe?" "Joe loves me," she said-"loves me a thousand times better than you Joe's man enough ever didchance death rather than lose his

"But I won't let you go!" said Greg-

You can't stop me," she returned. He caught her round the body and tried to hold her, but she fought herself free. His strength was gone; he was as feeble as a child; in the course of those short hours something semed to have snapped within him. Even Madge was start-

led at his weakness.
"Greg, you're ill!" she cried, as he staggered and caught at a backstay to save himself from falling. He sat down on the house and tried to keep back a sob. Madge stooped and looked anxiously into his face. She had known him for two years as a man of unusual sternness and selfcontrol; obstinate, reserved, willful and moody, yet one that gave always the impression of unflinching courage and resolution. It was inexplicable now to see him crying like a woman, his square shoulders bent and heaving, his sinewy hands opening and shutting convulsively.

"You're ill," she repeated. "I'll go

down and fetch you something."
This pulled him together. "I'm all right, Madge," he said, faintly. suppose it's just a touch of the old fever. See, it's passing already

She watched him in silence. Then she stepped forward, dropped down the forecastle hatchway, and reappeared with an ax. While be was wondering what she meant to do, she raised it in the air and crashed it down on the grouning anchor chain. It parted at the first blow, and the Edelweiss, now adrift, blundered broadside on to leeward.

Madge ran aft, brought the schooner up in the wind, and cried out to Gregory to get into his boat. He said sullenly he wouldn't do any-

thing of the kind. She lashed the wheel and came up to him.

"I mean it, Greg," she said. You are going to your death, Madge," he said.

"Get into your boat!" she repeated. He rose, and slowly began to obey,

obey. "You may kiss me good-by, Greg."

She put up her face to his; their lips met. Then, with her arm around him, she half forced, half supported him to the port quarter, where his boat was slopping against the side. He wanted to resist; he wanted to cry out and tell her the truth, but a strange, leaden powerlessness benumbed him. He got into the dinghy, drew in the dripping painter she cast after him, and watched her ease the sheet and set the vessel scudding for the passage. With her black hair flying in the wind, her bare arms resting lightly on the wheel, her straight, girlish, supple figure bending with the heel of the deck, she never faltered nor looked back as the water whitened and boiled in the schooner's

Gregory came to himself in his own cabin. Cracroft, the mate, was bending over him with a bottle of whisky. The Malita steward was chafing his naked feet. Overhead the rush and roar of the gale broke pitilessly on his ears.

"The Edelweiss!" he gasped; "the

"Went down an hour ago, sir," said Cracroft, grimly.